DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 451 CG 024 914

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TITLE Sextyping and Gender Schematicity: A Tenuous Relationship.
PUB DATE Aug 92
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (100th, Washington, DC, August 14-18, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; Expectation; Females; Higher Education; Sex Differences; *Sex Role; *Sexual Identity; Social Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Gender schematicity may be distinct from the quality of being sextyped or of endorsing societal values. Gender schematicity refers to the contents of a map or blueprint of what societal expectations regarding sex roles include. Bem explains that individuals who are gender schematic will spontaneously evaluate information using gender as a category. This study was conducted to examine the relationship between the gender schema and individual sextypes, measuring the relationship with a differential response latency measure of gender schematicity. Eighty female college students completed the Sex Role Behavior Inventory Short Form. Subjects who scored masculine or at the higher levels of androgynous, feminine, or undifferentiated were selected to participate in a reaction time experiment using the computer. Response time latency was used to measure the gender schema. The results of analyses revealed no expected relationship between sextyping and gender schematicity, suggesting that gender schematicity and sextyping are separate and distinct characteristics. Highly sextyped women did not appear to be highly gender schematic, nor did those reporting less sextyping appear to be less gender schematic. (Author/NB)

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Sextyping and Gender Schematicity: A Tenuous Relationship.

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Running Head: SEXTYPING AND GENDER SCHEMATICITY

Presented at the Centennial Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., August, 1992.

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Abstract

Gender schematicity may be distinct from the quality of being sextyped or of endorsing societal values. Gender Schematicity refers to the contents of a map or blueprint of what societal expectations regarding sex roles include. Bem (1981) explains that Individuals who are gender schematic will spontaneously evaluate information using gender as a category. Sextyped individuals can be characterized as conforming to societal expectations, in terms of traits, roles, and interests (Bem, 1987). Devine (1989) points out that one may be aware of and familiar with a certain stereotype, but may not himself or herself personally endorse or accept that stereotype. One may have a well developed map for information, without personally endorsing the values coded within the schema.One may be gender schematic without being sextyped.

The findings suggest that gender schematicity and sextyping are separate and distinct characteristics. As expected from the work of Mills and Tyrrell (1983) and of Deaux, Kite, and Lewis (1985), and in contrast to the suggestions outlined by Bem (1981), highly sextyped women did not appear to be highly gender schematic, nor did those reporting less sextyping appear to be less gender schematic. The gender schema may be active in women who are not highly sextyped (androgynous or undifferentiated) or even in those who are "cross sextyped" (masculine). Findings indicate that gender schematicity may occur in individuals regardless of individual sextype.

Sextyping and Gender Schematicity:
A Tenuous Relationship

The terms "gender schematic" and "sextyped" have been used interchangeably, but these are two distinct and independent contructs. Gender schematicity has even been used to explain sextyping. Bem (1984, p. 187) proposes that "sextyping derives in part from gender schematic processing". Gender Schematicity refers to the contents of a map or blueprint of what societal expectations regarding sex roles include. Bem (1981) explains that individuals who are gender schematic will spontaneously evaluate information using gender as a category. Sextyped individuals can be characterized as conforming to societal expectations, in terms of traits, roles, and interests. Bem (1987) defines sextyping as the act of acquiring those preferences, skills, personality attributes, behaviors, and self-concepts which are regarded by society as being sex-appropriate. One may be gender schematic without being sextyped.

Sextyping and gender schematicity are not necessarily found together. Mills and Tyrrell (1983) found that, contrary to gender schema theory (Bem, 1981), there were no sextyping effects in use of the gender schema in encoding information. Deaux, Kite, and Lewis (1985), following the procedures suggested by Bem (1981), were unable to find any measurable relationship between sextyping and clustering of gender-related words. These schemas can be measured by the speed and ease of processing, and by how elaborately they are processed. Gender schemas cannot be

measured by how well individuals conform to the contents.

Gender schematicity may be distinct from the quality of being sextyped or of endorsing societal values. Devine (1989) points out that one may be aware of and familiar with a certain stereotype, but may not personally endorse or accept that stereotype. One may have a well developed map for information, without personally endorsing the values coded within the schema.

The present research examined the relationship between the gender schema and individual sextypes. Previous researchers have demonstrated this lack of co-occurrence using the encoding (Mills and Tyrrell; 1983) and the clustering (Deaux, Kite, and Lewis; 1985) of information. This study measured the relationship using a differential response latency measure of gender schematicity. It is suggested that sex typing and gender schematicity are not co-occuring phenomena. Consequently, no interaction between gender schematicity and sextyping of subject was expected.

Method

Subjects

Eighty female college students enrolled in introductory psychology courses were preselected from an original pool of 231 women. Subjects received extra credit for their participation in the study. Those subjects invited to participate further were those who scored masculine or at the higher levels of androgynous, feminine, or undifferentiated.

Materials

Sextyping was measured using the Sex Role Behavior Scale Short Form (Orlofsky & O'Heron, 1987).

Gender schematicity was measured using a procedure developed in earlier studies by the researcher (Freedman, 1991a, 1991b). Gender schematicity was measured statistically via differential response latencies to three classes (neutral, feminine, and masculine) of gender related self-relevant information. All stimuli were presented in random order on a computer monitor. An existing computer program was modified for this procedure. Stimulus words consisted of adjectives chosen or adapted from the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975) M and F scales, from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1974), and careers from the work of Croxton, Van Rensslaer, Dutton, and Ellis (1989), Garland and Smith (1981), Kalin, Stoppard, and Burt (1980), Panek, Rush, and Greenawalt (1977) and O'Connor (1982). The traits and careers are listed in the Appendix.

Procedure

Subjects were asked to complete the Sex Role Behavior Inventory Short Form (Orlofsky & O'Heron, 1987) as a pre-requisite for participation in the experiment. Subjects were categorized according to the method presented by Orlofsky and O'Heron (1987). Androgynous individuals are those who fall above the median split for both feminine and masculine items.

Undifferentiated persons fall below the median for both feminine and masculine items. Feminine women fall above the median for feminine items, and below the median for masculine items. Masculine subjects fall above the median for masculine items and below the median for feminine items.

Those individuals selected were invited to participate in a reaction time experiment using the computer. Response time latency was used to measure the gender schema. They first completed an initial practice trial using five neutral adjectives. A baseline response latency was measured. Subjects then moved on to the attribution/latency task. The computer presented a series of cues, to which the subject was asked to respond yes or no by depressing the appropriate key. The average of the response times formed the baseline response latency. Stimuli were presented individually, in random order, on the screen, accompanied by a beep to orient the subject to the task. The subject's task was to determine whether each trait displayed was self-descriptive, and whether each career was self-appropriate. Subjects indicated their responses by depressing one of two keyboard keys labelled "yes" or "no" for the self attribution task. Each stimulus appeared on the screen and remained until a response was made. The clock was activated when a stimulus was presented and stopped when the subject depressed either button.

The baseline response time was subtracted from the experimental response latency between presentation and response.

Response latencies for feminine, masculine, and neutral items were computed. Significant differences between the classes were to reflect the gender schematicity or aschematicity of subjects.

Design

Two 4 x 3 ([sextyping: androgynous vs. feminine vs. masculine vs. undifferentiated] x [gender of word: Feminine vs. masculine vs. neutral] ANOVAs with subjects nested within sextype were conducted. Average response latencies for neutral, feminine, and masculine items were used as dependent variables.

Results

There was no expected relationship between sextyping and gender schematicity. The differences between the gender classes of words in response latency were expected to remain constant across sextypes. Thus, no significant interaction was expected between gender (of word) and sextyping (of subject). Sextype did not affect gender schematicity. No interaction was found between gender (of word) and sextyping (of subject) for traits F (3,72), = .35 p < .9102, or for careers, F (6,72) = .38, p < .8880.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that gender schematicity and sextyping are separate and distinct characteristics. As expected from the work of Mills and Tyrrell (1983) and of Deaux, Kite, and Lewis (1985), and in contrast to the suggestions outlined by Bem (1981), no interaction was found between sextype and level of gender schematicity. Highly sextyped women did not appear to be highly gender schematic, nor did those reporting less sextyping

appear to be less gender schematic. The gender schema may be active in women who are not highly sextyped (androgynous or undifferentiated) or even in those who are "cross sextyped" (masculine). Findings indicate that gender schematicity may occur in individuals regardless of individual sextype. As noted by Devine (1989) one may be aware of and familiar with certain stereotypes, but not personally endorse or accept them. One may be schematic for stereotypes regarding gender, without personally demonstrating these stereotypes.

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Author Notes

This research was funded by a grant (# 9015) to the author from the Womens' Research Institute at Virgnia Tech.

I am indebted to Dr. Hilary Lips for her invaluable initial help with the development of the scale, and for her insightful and useful comments on previous versions of this work. Thanks are due also to Rob and Sherry Wheeler for comments on many drafts of this paper. I am also grateful to the exceptional Library staff at Radford University, especially Dr. Benjamin Norris, Mr. David Hayes and Mr. Blair Brainard, for their help.

Statistical analysis was performed with the assistance of the Statistical Consulting Service at Radford University.